

*Remarks of Ambassador Louise Oliver  
At the “Picturing America” Symposium  
UNESCO Headquarters  
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AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY*

Good evening everyone, bienvenue à vous tous et toutes. Welcome to the opening event of American History and Culture Week at UNESCO. What a great pleasure it is to see you all here.

During much of the past year, the eyes of the world have been on America, watching democracy in action...first observing the Presidential primaries, and now the Presidential campaign itself, which, according to an article this morning in the International Herald Tribune, evokes the Wild West.

Our presidential candidates have to travel all over the United States, describing their hopes and dreams for our country, and discussing the policies and programs that they think will make them a reality. It is hard work, as we are a big country, with fifty very different states, each with its own identity and culture. However, despite our differences and diversity, we are held together by a common heritage and shared ideals.

In order to make sure that those ideals are understood, and our heritage remembered, the National Endowment for the Humanities, one of the premier cultural institutions in the United States, has developed Picturing America, which is a tool to help teach American history to students through our nation's art.

This evening we are very fortunate to have the Chairman of NEH with us, Dr. Bruce Cole, who will discuss this exhibit and will tell us the “behind the scenes” story of Picturing America. Welcome Dr. Cole.

Of course Picturing America was a major project, and so Dr. Cole persuaded some other cultural agencies to join him in this effort. One of his most enthusiastic partners was Dr. Anne Radice, the Director of the Institute of Museum and Library Services. Dr. Radice, we are very pleased to have you with us at this symposium.

When one talks about American history and culture, it is important to begin at the beginning, which means focusing on the Native Americans who were in America long before immigrants arrived from Europe and other parts of the world.

So this evening we are going to start our symposium by hearing some traditional Native American chants. These will be performed by Tha Boyz, a group of young Native Americans from the Ojibwe, Ute du Nord, Shoshone, Nes-Perce, Blackfeet, and Taos Pueblo tribes, who are interested in reviving their traditional culture.

But first I would like to extend a special welcome to the Director-General, who will now make a few remarks. Mr. Director General, you honor us with your presence here tonight. Thank you for joining us.

- [Address by Mr. Koïchiro Matsuura, Director-General of UNESCO – Click here to read the complete text](#)
- Performance of Native American Chants by “Tha Boyz”

Thank you very much, and thank you again for joining us this evening. I hope those chants will bring us good luck, and perhaps a successful Executive Board meeting.

As almost everyone at UNESCO now knows, the United States does not have a Minister of Culture. Although we have some national cultural institutions, such as the Smithsonian Institution, the vast majority of our cultural initiatives and activities come from the energy and enthusiasm of individuals and local communities, as well as from leadership at the state level. In order to help encourage and support these efforts, we have a number of Federal cultural agencies, whose mission is to provide leadership and funding to cultural initiatives throughout the United States. The National Endowment for the Humanities, led by Dr. Cole, and the Institute of Museum and Libraries Services, led by Dr. Radice, are two of the most active and important of these agencies.

Dr. Bruce Cole was appointed Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities by President George Bush in 2001, and unanimously approved for reappointment by the U.S. Senate in 2005. The Endowment is the independent grant-making agency of the U.S. government dedicated to supporting research, education, preservation, and public programs in the humanities. Prior to that, he was Distinguished Professor of Art History and Professor of Comparative literature at Indiana University in Bloomington, Indiana.

Dr. Cole was born in Ohio. He received his master’s degree from Oberlin College and his doctorate from Bryn Mawr College. He is widely recognized as an expert in Renaissance art, and has written fourteen books about that topic. He has had fellowships and grants from numerous foundations and institutions, and has received nine honorary degrees. In 2008, he was decorated Knight of the Grand Cross, the highest honor of Italy.

Several years ago, I accompanied Dr. Cole to the Louvre to look at Renaissance paintings. We dragged ourselves out of the Louvre about seven hours later---Dr. Cole in a state of ecstasy and exhilaration, and me in a state of complete exhaustion. I learned more from Dr. Cole that day than I did from two years of History of Art courses.

As NEH Chairman, Dr. Cole launched We the People, a program to encourage the teaching, study, and understanding of American history and culture. We the People has also begun a partnership with the Library of Congress to catalog and digitize the story of America's past, as told in our historic newspapers. We the People has now launched Picturing America, which tells America's national story through its greatest artistic masterpieces. We will see reproductions of those masterpieces in Hall Segur after this symposium.

Appointed by President Bush, Dr. Radice was confirmed by the U.S. Senate in March 2006 as Director of the Institute of Museum and Library Services. The IMLS, an independent government agency, is the primary source of Federal support for the nation's 122,000 libraries and 17,500 museums. Dr. Radice, a distinguished art and architecture historian, museum professional and administrator, is the driving force behind an initiative entitled Connecting to Collections: A Call to Action, which is a national conservation initiative designed to raise public awareness, inspire action, and encourage private sector support for conservation. Under her leadership, IMLS has also begun the International Strategic Partnerships initiative to establish international partnerships and make connections around the globe.

Dr. Radice, who has an MBA from American University in Washington DC and a Ph.D in art and architectural history from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, has worked in numerous cultural institutions including the National Gallery of Art, the office of the Architect of the U.S. Capitol, the National Museum of Women in the Arts, the U.S. Information Agency, the National Endowment of the Arts, the Friends of Dresden---take note my fellow World Heritage Committee members---and the Department of Education.

So now I'd like to turn this symposium over to these two distinguished individuals, starting with you Dr. Cole.

- [Presentation by Dr. Cole – Click here to read the complete text](#)
- [Remarks by Dr. Radice - Click here to read the complete text](#)